

The Exploits of Elaine

A Detective Novel and a Motion Picture Drama

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SYNOPSIS.

The New York police are mystified by a series of murders and other crimes. The principal clue to the criminal is the warning letter which is sent the victim, signed with a "clutching hand." The latest victim of the mysterious assassin is Taylor Dodge, the insurance president. His daughter, Elaine, employs Craig Kennedy, the famous scientific detective, to try to unravel the mystery. What Kennedy accomplishes is told by his friend Jameson, a newspaper man. Enraged at the determined effort which Elaine and Craig Kennedy are making to put an end to his crimes, the Clutching Hand, as this strange criminal is known, resorts to all sorts of the most diabolical schemes to put them out of the way. Each chapter of the story tells of a new plot against their lives and of the way the great detective uses all his skill to save this pretty girl and himself from death.

TWELFTH EPISODE

THE BLOOD CRYSTALS.

"On your right is the residence of Miss Elaine Dodge, who is pursuing the famous master criminal known as the Clutching Hand."

The Barker had been grandiloquently pointing out the residences of noted New Yorkers as the big sight-seeing car lumbered along through the streets.

No one had paid any attention to the unobtrusive Chinaman who sat inconspicuously in the middle of the car. He was Mr. Wong Long Sin, but no one saw anything particularly mysterious about an Oriental visitor, more or less, viewing New York city.

Wong was of the mandarin type, with long, drooping mustache, well dressed in American clothes, and conforming to the new customs of an Occidentalized China.

Anyone, however, who had been watching Long Sin would have seen that he showed much interest whenever any of the wealthy residents of the city were mentioned. The name of Elaine Dodge seemed particularly to strike him. He listened with subtle interest to what the Barker said and looked keenly at the Dodge house.

The sight-seeing car had passed the house, when he rose slowly and motioned that he wanted to be let off. The car stopped, he alighted and slowly rambled away, evidently marveling greatly at the strange customs of these uncouth Westerners.

Elaine was going out when she met Perry Bennett almost on the steps of the house.

"I've brought you the watch," remarked Bennett. "Thought I'd like to give it to you myself."

He displayed the watch which he himself had bought a couple of days before for her birthday. He had called for it himself at the jeweler's, where it had now been regulated.

"Oh, thank you," exclaimed Elaine. "Won't you come in?"

They had scarcely greeted each other when Long Sin strode along. Neither of them, however, had time to notice the quiet Chinaman who passed the house, looking at Elaine sharply out of the corner of his eye. They entered and Wong disappeared down the street.

"Isn't it a beauty?" cried Elaine, holding it out from her as they entered the library, and examining it with great appreciation. "And, oh, do you know, the strangest thing happened yesterday! Sometimes Mr. Kennedy acts too queerly for anything."

She related how Craig had burst in on her and Aunt Josephine and had almost torn the other watch off her wrist.

"Another watch?" repeated Bennett, amazed. "It must have been a mistake. Kennedy is crazy."

"I don't understand it, myself," murmured Elaine.

Long Sin was revolving some dark and devious plan beneath his impassive Oriental countenance. He was no ordinary personage. In fact, he was astute enough to have no record. He left that to his tools.

This remarkable criminal had established himself in a hired apartment down town.

Long Sin, now in rich Oriental costume, was reclining on a divan smoking a strange-looking pipe and playing with two pet white rats. Each white rat had a gold band around his leg, to which was connected a gold chain about a foot in length, and the chains ended in rings which were slipped over Wong's little fingers. Ordinarily he carried the pets up the capacious sleeve of each arm.

A little Chinese girl, also in native costume, entered and bowed deferentially.

"A Miss Mary Carson," she lisped in soft English.

"Let the lady enter," waved Long Sin, with a smile of subtle satisfaction.

The girl bowed again and silently left the room, returning with a handsome, very well-dressed white woman. It would be difficult to analyze just what the fascination was that Long Sin exercised over Mary Carson. But as the servant left the room, Mary bowed almost as deferentially as the little Chinese girl. Wong merely nodded in reply.

After a moment he slowly rose and took from a drawer a newspaper clipping. Without a word he handed it to

Mary. She looked at it with interest, as one woman always does at the picture of another pretty woman. It was a newspaper cut of Elaine, under which was:

"ELAINE DODGE, THE HEIRESS, WHOSE BATTLE WITH THE CLUTCHING HAND IS CREATING WORLD-WIDE INTEREST."

"Now," he began at last, breaking the silence. "I'll show you just what I want you to do."

He went over to the wall and took down a curious long Chinese knife from a scabbard which hung there conspicuously.

"See that?" he added, holding it up. Before she could say a word he had plucked the knife, apparently, into his own breast.

"Oh!" cried Mary, startled. She expected to see him fall. But nothing happened. Wong laughed. It was an oriental trick knife, in which the blade telescoped into the handle.

"Look at it," he added, handing it to her.

Long Sin took a bladder of water from a table near by and concealed it under his coat. "Now, you stab me," he directed.

Mary hesitated. But he repeated the command and she plunged the knife gingerly at him. It telescoped. He made her try it over, and she stabbed him more resolutely. The water from the bladder poured out.

"Good!" cried Long Sin, much pleased. "Now," he added, seating himself beside her, "I want you to lure Elaine here."

I had been amusing myself by rigging up a contrivance by which I could make it possible to see through, or, rather, over, a door.

Kennedy, who had been busy at the other end of the laboratory, happened to look over in my direction. "What's the big idea, Walter?" he asked.

It was, I admit, a rather cumbersome and clumsy affair.

"Well, you see, Craig," I explained, "you put the top mirror through the transom of a door and—"

Kennedy interrupted with a hearty burst of laughter. "But suppose the door has no transom?" he asked, pointing to his own door.

I scratched my head thoughtfully. I had assumed that the door would have a transom. A moment later Craig went to the cabinet and drew out a tube about as big around as a putty blower and as long.

"Now, here's what I call my detectoscope," he remarked. "None of your mirrors for me."

"I know," I said somewhat nettled, "but what can you see through that



Elaine Took Out the Package of Bills.

putty blower? A keyhole is just as good."

"Do you realize how little you can really see through a keyhole?" he replied confidently. "Try it over there."

I did, and, to tell the truth, I could see merely a little part of the hall. Then Kennedy inserted the detectoscope.

"Look through that," he directed. I put my eye to the eye piece and gazed through the bulging lens of the other end. I could see almost the whole hall.

Elaine was playing with Rusty when Jennings brought in a card on which was engraved the name, "Miss Mary Carson," and underneath in pencil was written "Belgian Relief Committee."

"How interesting," commented Elaine, rising and accompanying Jennings into the drawing room. "I wonder what she wants?"

"Very pleased to greet you, Miss Carson," she greeted her visitor.

"You see, Miss Dodge," began Mary, "We're getting up this movement to help the Belgians and we have splendid backing. Just let me show you some of the names on our committee."

She handed Elaine a list.

"I've just been sent to see if I cannot persuade you to join the committee and attend a meeting at Mrs. Rivington's," she went on.

"Why—er," considered Elaine, thoughtfully, "er—yes. It must be all right with such people in it."

"Can you go down with me now?"

"Just as well as later," agreed Elaine.

They went out together, and as they were leaving the house a man who had been loitering outside looked at Elaine, then fixedly at her companion.

No sooner had they gone than he sped off to a car waiting around the corner. In the dark depths was a sinister figure, the master criminal himself. The watcher had been an emissary of the Clutching Hand.

"Chief," he whispered eagerly, "you know Adventurous Mary? Well, she's got Elaine Dodge in tow!"

"The deuce!" cried Clutching Hand. "Then we must teach Mary Carson, or whoever she is working for, a lesson. No one shall interfere with our affairs. Follow them!"

Elaine and Mary had gone downtown, talking animatedly—walking down the avenue toward Mrs. Rivington's apartment.

Meanwhile, Wong Sin, still in his Chinese costume, was explaining to another male servant just what he wished done, pointing out the dagger on the wall and placing the bladder under his jacket. A box of opium was on the table, and he was giving most explicit directions. It was into such a web that Elaine was being unwittingly led by Mary.

Entering the hallway of the apartment, Mary rang the bell.

The servant opened the door and Elaine and Mary entered. He closed the door and almost before they knew it was gone into the back room.

Elaine gazed about in trepidation. But before she could say anything, Mary, with a great show of surprise, exclaimed, "Why, I must have made a mistake. This isn't Mrs. Rivington's apartment. How stupid of me!"

They looked at each other a moment. Then each laughed nervously, as together they started to go out of the door. It was locked!

Quickly they ran to another door. It was locked also.

Just then the Chinaman entered and stood a moment gazing at them. They turned and Elaine recoiled from him. Wong bowed.

"Oh, sir," cried Mary, "we've made a mistake. Can't you tell us how to get out?"

"No speke Englis," he said, gliding out again from the room and closing the door.

Elaine and Mary looked about in despair.

"What shall we do?" asked Elaine.

Mary said nothing, but with a hasty glance discovered on the wall the knife which Wong had already told her about. She took it from its scabbard. As she did so the Chinaman returned with a tray on which were queer drinks and glasses.

At the sight of Mary with the knife he scowled blackly, laid down the tray, and took a few steps in her direction. She brandished the knife threateningly; then, as if her nerve failed her, fainted, letting the knife fall carefully on the floor so that it struck on the handle, and not on the blade.

Wong quickly caught her as she fainted and carrying her out of the room, banged shut the door. Elaine followed in a moment, loyally to protect her supposed friend, but found that the door had a snap lock on the other side.

She looked about wildly, and in a moment Wong reappeared. As he advanced slowly and insinuatingly, she drew back, pleading. But her words fell on seemingly deaf ears.

She had picked up the knife which Mary had dropped, and when at last Wong maneuvered to get her cornered and was about to seize her, she nerved herself up and stabbed at him resolutely.

Wong staggered back—and fell.

As he did so, he pressed the bladder which he had already placed under his coat. A dark red fluid, like blood, oozed out all over him and ran in a pool on the floor.

Elaine, too horror-stricken at what had happened even to scream, dropped the knife and bent over him. He did not move. She rose quickly and ran through the now open door. As she did so, Wong seemed suddenly to come to life. He raised himself and looked after her, then with a subtle smile sank back into his former assumed posture on the floor.

When Elaine reached the other room she found Mary there with the Chinese servant who was giving her a glass of water. At the sight of her, the servant paused, then withdrew into another room farther back. Mary, now apparently recovering from her faintness, smiled wanly at Elaine.

"It's all right," she murmured. "He is a Chinese prince who thought we were callers."

At the reassuring nod of Mary toward the front room, Elaine was overcome.

"I—I killed him!" she managed to gasp.

"What?" cried Mary, starting up and trembling violently. "You killed him?"

"Yes," sobbed Elaine. "He came at me—had the knife—I struck at him."

The two girls ran into the other

room. There Mary looked at the motionless body on the floor and recoiled, horrified.

Elaine noticed some spots on her hands, and, seeing that they were stained by the blood of Long Sin, wiped the spots off on her handkerchief, dropping it to the floor.

"Ugh!" exclaimed a guttural voice behind them.

It was the servant who had come in.

"You—kill him—with knife?" insinuated the Chinese.

Elaine was dumb. The servant did not wait for an answer, but hastily opened the hall door.

To Elaine it seemed that something must be done quickly. A moment and all the house would be in uproar.

Instead, he placed his finger on his lips. "Quick—no word," he said, leading the way to the hall door, "and—oh, you must not leave that—it will be a clue," he added, picking up the bloody handkerchief and pressing it into Elaine's hand.

They quickly ran out into the hall.

"Go—quick!" he urged again, "and hide the handkerchief in the bag. Let no one see it!"

He shut the door. As they hurried away Elaine breathed a sigh of relief.

They had reached the street. Afraid to run, they hurried as fast as they could until they turned the first corner.

They pressed each other's hands and parted.

Meanwhile in the front room Long Sin was on his feet again, brushing himself off and mopping up the blood.

"It worked very well, Sam," he said to the servant.

They were conversing eagerly and laughing and did not hear a noise in the back room.

A sinister figure had made its way by means of a fire escape to a rear



Elaine, Too Horror-Stricken Even to Scream, Dropped the Knife and Bent Over Him.

window that was not barred, and silently he had stolen in on them.

They turned at a slight noise and saw him. Genuine fright was now on their faces as they looked at him, open mouthed.

"What's all this?" he growled. "I am known as the Clutching Hand. I allow no interference with my affairs. Tell me what you are doing here with Elaine Dodge?"

Their beadly almond eyes flashed fear. The Clutching Hand moved menacingly. There was nothing for the astute Wong Long Sin to do but to submit.

With a low bow, Wong spread out his hands in surrender and submission.

"I will tell you, honorable sir," he said at length.

"Go on!" growled the criminal.

Quickly Wong rehearsed what had happened from the moment the idea of blackmail entered his head.

"How about Mary Carson?" asked Clutching Hand. "I saw her here."

Wong gave a glance of almost superstitious dread at the man.

"She will be back—is here now," he added, opening the door at a knock and admitting her.

Adventurous Mary had hurried back to see that all was right. This time Mary was genuinely scared at the forbidding figure of which she had heard.

"It is all right," pacified Wong. "Henceforth we work with the honorable Clutching Hand."

At home at last, Elaine sank down into a deep library chair and stared straight ahead. She saw visions of arrest and trial, of the terrible electric chair with herself in it, bound, and of the giving of the fatal signal for turning on the current.

Were such things as these going to happen to her, without Kennedy's help? Why had they quarreled? She buried her face in her hands and wept.

Then she could stand it no longer. She had not taken off her street clothes. She rose and almost fled from the house.

Kennedy and I were still in the laboratory when a knock sounded at the door. I went to the door and opened it. There stood Elaine Dodge.

It was a complete surprise to Craig.

"What is the matter?" he asked.

She hesitated, then suddenly burst out, "Craig—I—I am—a murderess!"

I had never before seen such a look on Craig's face as suddenly came over it.

Then she poured forth the story substantially as I have set it down, but without the explanation, which at that time was not known to any of us.

"Oh," expostulated Craig, there must be some mistake. It's impossible—impossible."

"No," she asserted. "Look—here's my handkerchief all spotted with blood."

She opened the bag and displayed the blood-spotted handkerchief. He took it and examined it carefully.

"Elaine," he said earnestly, not at all displeased I could see, that something had come up that might blot out the past unfortunate misunderstanding, "there simply must be something wrong here. Leave this handkerchief with me. I'll do my best."

"Thank you," she said simply as she left the laboratory.

Craig went to work abruptly without a word.

On the laboratory table he placed his splendid microscope and several cases of slides, as well as innumerable micro-photographs. He had been working for some time when he looked up.

"It is dog's blood—not human blood," he said simply, "but what's the game back of all this—that's the main question now."

It was not much later that Elaine received a second visit from Mary.

"Do you know why the servant allowed us to leave the apartment?" whispered Mary with a glance about fearfully, as if the walls had ears.

"No—why?" inquired Elaine anxiously.

"He's a long man who has been chosen to do away with the prince. He followed me, and says you have done his work for him. If you will give him ten thousand dollars for expenses he will attend to hiding the body."

Here, at least, was a way out.

"It is the safest way out of the trouble. Yes, I'll do it. I'll stop at the bank now and get the money."

They rose and Mary preceded her, eager to get away from the house. At the door, however, Elaine asked her to wait while she ran back on some pretext.

Our telephone rang in the middle

of our conversation on blood crystals, and Kennedy himself answered it.

It was Elaine asking Craig's advice.

"They have offered to hush the thing up for ten thousand dollars," she said in a muffled voice.

She seemed bent on doing it, and no amount of argument from him could stop her. She simply refused to accept the evidence of the blood crystals as better than what her own eyes told her she had seen and done.

"Then wait for half an hour," he answered, without arguing further. "You can do that without exciting suspicion. Then go with her to her hotel and hand her over the money."

"All right—I'll do it," she agreed.

"What is the hotel?"

Craig wrote on a slip of paper what she told him—"Room 509, Hotel La Coste."

Hastily he threw on his street coat, "Go into the back room and get me a brace and bit, Walter," he said.

I did so. When I returned I saw that he had placed the detectoscope and some stuff in a bag. He shoved in the brace and bit also.

"Come on—hurry!" he urged.

We must have made record time in getting to the La Coste. It was an ornate place, where merely to breathe was expensive. We entered, and by some excuse Kennedy contrived to get past the vigilant bell-hops. We passed the telephone switchboard and entered the elevator, getting off at the fifth floor.

With a hasty glance up and down the corridor, to make sure no one was about, Kennedy came to Room 509, opened the door with a skeleton key.

Quickly Craig went to the door which led to the next room. It was, of course, locked also. He listened a moment carefully. Not a sound. Quickly, with an exclamation of satisfaction, he opened that door also and went into 509.

This room was much like that in which we had already been. He opened the hall door.

"Watch here, Walter," he directed.

"Let me know at the slightest alarm."

Craig had already taken the brace and bit from the bag and started to bore through the wall in Room 511, selecting a spot behind a picture of a Spanish dancer—a spot directly back of her snapping black eyes. He finished quickly and inserted the detectoscope so that the lens fitted as an eye in the picture. The eye-piece was in room 511. Then he started to brush up the pieces of plaster on the floor.

"Craig," I whispered hastily as I heard an elevator door, "someone's coming!"

He hurried to the door and looked.

"There they are," he said, as he saw Elaine and Mary rounding the corner of the hall.

Across the hall, although we did not know it at the time, in room 540, already Wong Sin had taken up his station, just to be handy. There he had been with his servant, playing with his two trained white rats.

Wong placed them up his capacious sleeves and carefully opened the door to look out. Unfortunately he was just in time to see the door of 509 open and disclose us.

We hurried into 511 and shut the door.

Kennedy mounted a chair and applied his eye to the detectoscope. Just then Mary and Elaine entered the next room. Mary opening the door with a regular key.

"Won't you step in?" she asked.

Elaine did so and Mary hesitated in the hall. Wong Sin had slipped out on noiseless feet and taken refuge behind some curtains. As he saw her alone, he beckoned, to Mary.

"There's a stranger in the next room," he whispered. "I don't like him. Take the money and as quickly as possible get out and go to my apartment."

At the news that there was a suspicious stranger about Mary showed great alarm. Everything was so rapid now that the slightest hesitation meant disaster. Perhaps by quickness even a suspicious stranger could be fooled, she reasoned. At any rate, Wong Sin was resourceful. She had better trust him.

Mary followed Elaine into the room, where she had seated herself already, and locked the door.

"Have you the money there?" she asked.

"Yes," nodded Elaine, taking out the package of bills which she had got from the bank during the half-hour delay.

All this we could see by gazing alternately through the detectoscope. Elaine handed Mary the money. Mary counted it slowly. At last she looked up.

"It's all right," she said. "Now, I'll take this to that tong leader. He's in a room only just across the hall."

She went out.

Mary had just succeeded in getting on the elevator as Kennedy hurried down the hall. The door was closed and the car descended. He rang the push bell furiously, but there was no answer.

He dashed back to the room with us and jerked the telephone receiver.

"Hello—hello—hello!" he called.

There seemed to be no way to get a connection. What was the matter?

He hurried down the hall again. Down in the hotel lobby, with his follower, the Chinaman paused before the telephone switchboard, where two girls were at work.

"You may go," ordered Wong, and, as his man left, he moved over close to the switchboard.

Just as a call from 509 flashed up, Wong slipped the rings off his little fingers and loosened the white rats on the telephone switchboard itself.

With a shriek the telephone system of the Coste went temporarily out of business.

Kennedy had succeeded in finding the alcove of the floor clerk in charge of the fifth floor. There on his desk was an instrument having a stylus on the end of two arms, connected to a system of magnets. It was a telautograph.

Unceremoniously Craig pushed the clerk out of his seat and sat down himself. It was a last chance, now that the telephone was out of commission.

Downstairs in the hotel office, where the excitement had not spread to every one, was the other end of the electric long-distance writer.

It started to write, as Kennedy wrote, upstairs:

"House Detective—quick—hold woman with blue chataleine bag, getting out of elevator."

The clerks downstairs saw it and shouted above the din of the rat-baiting:

"McCann—McCann!"

The clerk had torn off the message from the telautograph register and handed it to the house man, who pushed his way to the desk.

Quickly the detective called to the bell-hops. Together they hurried after the well-dressed woman who had just swept out of the elevator. Mary had already passed through the excited lobby and out, and was about to cross the street—safe.

McCann and the bell-hops were now in full cry after her. Flight was useless. She took refuge in indignation and threats.

But McCann was obdurate. She passed quickly to tears and pleadings. It had no effect. They insisted on leading her back. The game was up.

"Here," cried Kennedy, "take her up in the elevator. I'll prove the case."

"Now—not a word of who she is in the papers, McCann," Kennedy concluded, referring to Elaine. "You know, it wouldn't sound well for the La Coste. As for that woman—well, I've got the money back. You can take her